

Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 NSCE-00 SSO-00

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9065

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: SOPN, HK, CH

SUBJECT: NBC STORY ON CHINA WATCHING

1. NCB REPRESENTATIVES IN HONG KONG HAVE REQUESTED CONGEN COOPERATION IN THE PREPARATION OF A FIVE-TO-SEVEN MINUTE TELEVISION REPORT ON CHINA WATCHING FROM HONG KONG. THEY TELL US THE REPORT IS TO BE PART OF A NEW SERIES OF IN-DEPTH NEWS STORIES FOR USE IN THE MAIN NCB EVENING NEWS BROADCAST. FOCUS OF THE REPORT IS TO BE ON THE COMPLEXITY OF THE PROBLEM, THE NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS IN HONG KONG ENGAGED IN THIS ACTIVITY, TYPE OF TRAINING NEEDED TO MAKE A GOOD CHINA WATCHER AND HOW MATERIAL IS COLLECTED AND USED. IN SUM, NBC COMTEMPLATES THIER REPORT WILL EMPHASIZE THE "HOW" OF CHINA WATCHING WITH NO REFERENCE TO SUBSTANTIVE POLICY QUESTIONS.

2. IN OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH NBC, WE HAVE TAKEN THE POSITION THAT THE CONGEN MAINATINS A LOW PUBLIC POSTURE IN THIS AREA AND THAT, WHILE WE ARE PREPARED TO ASSIT AMERICAN NEWSMAN WITH BACKGROUND BRIEFING ON CHINA MATTERS, WE DO NOT COMMENT PUBLICY ON THIS SUBJECT. WE HAVE FURHER POINTED OUT POTENTIAL EMBARRASSEMENT OT USG BY ON-CAMERA INTERVIEWS WITH AMERICAN OFFICERS INVOLVED IN THIS TYPE OF WORK. WE HAVE INDICATED OUR WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS THE MATTER ON AN OFF-HE RECORD BASIS WITH NCB BUT HAVE SAID THAT WE ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO ACCEDE FULLY TO THEIR REQUEST FOR ON-CAMERA INTERVIES AND "MOOD SHOTS" IN THE CONGEN BUILDING ITSELF.

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3. NCB'S REACTION TO OUR POSITION HAS BEEN ONE OF MIXED APPRECIATION OF OUR VIES BUT WITH A REPEATED INSISTENCE FOR COOPERATION ALONG THE LINES THEY DESIRE. THEY POINT OUT THAT THEY ARE GOING TO DO THE STORY WITH OR WITHOUT OUR COOPERATION AND THAT THE LACK OF THIS COULD RESULT IN A SOMEWHAT INACCURATE AND UNBALANCED REPORT INASMUCH AS IT WOULD NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CONSULATE GENERAL IN THIS AREA. IT ALSO POSSIBLE THAT, IF WE CANNOT BE FORTHCOMING, SPECIFICREFERENCE MAY BE MADE TO THIS IN THE REPORT.

4. WE WOULD APPRECIATE THE DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE ASAP BECAUSE NCB WISHES TO COMPLETE THIS PROGRAM BY THE END OF THIS WEEK. NBC IS GOING AHEAD WITH THE STORY WITH OR WITHOUT OUR ASSISTANCE BUT WE BELIEVE THAT A REFUSAL ON OUR PART TO ASSIST WITH ON-CAMERA INTERVIEWS MIGHT POSSIBLY RESULT IN CRITICAL COMMENTS ABOUT THE LACK OF COOPERATION BY AMERICAN OFFICIAL IN HONG KONG. HOWEVER, , WE THINK THIS IS LESS IMPORTANT THAN TO MAINTAIN OUR ESSENTIAL LOW PROFILE AND BACKGROUND ONLY POSITION ON PRC MATTERS. WE WOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO SAY WE ARE COMPLYING WITH DEPT'S GUIDANCE IN THIS RESPECT.
CROSS

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